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WINTER BOTANIZING.

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IN the early years of my botanical experience October brought to a close the collecting season, and with the appearance of the Witch-Hazel flowers I thought it useless to continue further exploration. As the Hepatica was to me, in those years at least, the first flower of the year, so the Witch-Hazel was the last. These two species marked the beginning and the end of my botanical calendar. For eleven years my notebooks show no date later than October 22, but as the seasons came and went subjects of alluring interest presented themselves, gradually extending the botanical year at both ends, so that now to quote a sentence from Thoreau, "You cannot say that vegetation absolutely ceases at any season in this latitude."

The late E. H. Hitchings of interesting memory has recorded the fact that "the wild flowers even in this cold region, blossom every month in the year,"¹ adding in proof of his statement that he had found the Hepatica in flower from September to May, nine consecutive months. Somewhat surprised as well as interested by these statements, and with a desire to know for myself the extent to which our plants are found in flower during the winter months, I have during the past few years noted all such as I have seen or that have come to my notice through other observers. It is not of course intended in this article to include cryptogamous plants, such as mosses, lichens, fungi and algae, many of which, indeed, attain their fullest development more abundantly in the winter than in the summer months.

That wild-flowers bloom all the year round in New England, though literally true, is a statement obviously to be taken with many qualifica-

¹ Transactions Mass. Hort. Society, 1893.

tions, and it may be remarked that the smallest botanical box will be sufficiently large to hold all that may be found during the months of January and February. The two months just mentioned are, however, the only ones in which flowering plants will be found at all scarce.

Beginning with November let us briefly review the floral conditions existing in eastern Massachusetts during the colder months of the year. In this month plants in flower are so numerous as hardly to excite comment. On a recent excursion, November 13, fifty-one species still in flower were recorded, and the list might easily have been enlarged by further search.

In December during the earlier part of the month, should the ground be free from snow and the weather mild, as is frequently the case in this region, numerous plants still lingering in flower can usually be found without much effort. In that delightful sketch, "December out of Doors," by Bradford Torrey, occurs the fullest list of December flowers that I have yet seen. He records the names of sixteen species, and to that number I have thus far been able to add but three others, as follows: Hepatica (*Hepatica triloba*, Chaix), recorded by E. H. Hitchings; Common Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*, Weber); Seaside Golden Rod (*Solidago sempervirens*, L.). The Golden Rod I found as late as December 22, at Revere Beach, Mass., in fine fresh flower, though with blackened and shrivelled leaves.

The record for the next two months, January and February, though meagre, does not lack its representatives. In January there have been found in flower the Hepatica, E. H. Hitchings; Knawel (*Scleranthus annuus*, L.); Groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*, L.), Bradford Torrey; Chickweed (*Stellaria media*, Cyrill.); and the Dandelion. On the 18th of this month in 1899 the Dandelion appeared in full bloom on a grassy bank at Chelsea, Mass., in such numbers as to attract public attention.

In February my list records the Hepatica, E. H. Hitchings; Chickweed, concerning which Thoreau remarks "apparently it never rests"; Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*, Salisb.), Frank Bolles; Dandelion; Mayflower (*Epigaea repens*, L.), a small bunch of which I received from Orleans, Mass., that was collected in full flower February 12, 1899, and on the same day my informant adds that some Strawberry plants in his garden were in bloom. The Dandelion, it may be said, has been found in flower every month of the year. Willows in staminate flower are occasionally met with in January and February, but owing to the difficulty of identifying the species they are not included in the lists.

I have confidence that the scant record for these two months can be increased as future opportunities offer for more extended observations, and doubtless some of the readers of *RHODORA* may be able to add to the number.

March, though sometimes in New England one of the severest of the winter months, offers so many plants in flower, especially toward the latter part, that a list of them would not be of especial interest.

There is other and more important work, however, in winter botanizing, than the mere enumeration of such chance flowers as a mild season may offer as a reward for the botanist's constant attention. Many fruits of trees and shrubs can now be collected and studied with better advantage than was possible earlier in the season. A hitherto much neglected subject for study is that of the winter state of our trees and shrubs, one to which increasing attention is now being given. It is surprising how few of them can be readily recognized by even the most competent botanist, and the collection and study of specimens of bark, twigs, and buds in their winter state will be found full of interest. The complete herbarium must show specimens of these in addition to leaves and flowers.

Another subject for study in winter botanizing is the observation of the radical leaves and basal shoots of herbs, some of which differ so much at this stage from those which we are accustomed to associate with the plant as to be very puzzling, and furnish material for collecting on many a winter walk.

While engaged in his occasional winter outings, in these and other kindred occupations, the botanist will soon have his attention attracted to other objects of most fascinating interest. On the lowlands, as he passes along on a sunshiny day in late February and March he will suddenly see, in the gleaming olive of a row of Willow shrubs and in the brilliant red of the Blueberry bushes, on a rocky hillside, signs that will remind him of the approach of another season, and as he stands upon the threshold of a new springtime, before he becomes engulfed in its rising tide of life, he would linger yet a little longer in the enjoyment of the winter's offerings.

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